BAPTISM IN A NUTSHELL

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BAPTISM IN A NUTSHELL:

THE

PROPER SUBJECTS

AND

THE PROPER MODE

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ADVERTISEMENT.

This little book embraces, in a condensed form, every important idea found in my work on Baptism, already published, together with some new thoughts deemed very important, and very convincing. This book, designed for the people, contains much matter in a small compass, and is therefore entitled BAPTISM IN A NUTSHELL. The writer makes no claims to great originality, but has put into this little casket jewels gathered from all quarters.

BAPTISM IN A NUTSHELL.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROPER SUBJECTS.

ADULTS, upon a credible profession of their faith in Christ, and having not been baptized before, are, unquestionably, proper subjects of baptism. But we go further, and affirm that the *infants* of such as are members of the visible Church are also to be baptized. Our argument is this: Infant membership formed a part of the original constitution of the visible Church on earth. This membership has never been abolished; therefore, infants have a right to membership still. Baptism has taken the place of the ancient initiatory ordinance of circumcision, and, therefore, infants ought to be baptized. Here are several affirmations.

First. Infant membership formed a part of the original constitution of the visible Church of God on earth. By whom was the visible Church originally organized? and when? Not by John

the Baptist, nor any in his day; for Stephen, referring to patriarchal times, speaks of "the Church in the wilderness." From the first promise given—"The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"—down to the time of Abraham, there seems to have been a covenant between God and his people, extending some special benefits to their children; hence this record, "and God blessed Noah, *and his sons!*" and this language again, "and God spake unto Noah, *and his sons* with him, saying, Behold, I establish my covenant with you, and your seed after you." But, for a more full and distinct development of the principle of a Church organization, we must refer to the time of Abraham. Him God separated from the heathen; with him entered into a covenant, appointing circumcision as a sign and seal of that covenant; promising to be a God to him and his seed after him. In accordance with the provisions of this covenant, Abraham forthwith proceeded to bring his family into a state of Church-relationship with God, making use of circumcision, the rite then prescribed. And when Isaac was subsequently born, he also was added, when eight days old, by the application of the same sealing ordinance. This was the organization of the visible

Church. It was no national affair, as some suppose, for, at that time, it embraced but one family, and the posterity of Abraham had no national existence for many ages after. Besides, the covenant upon which this Church relation was based was said to be an everlasting covenant; and we all know that the posterity of Abraham, as a nation, have long since ceased to exist. It had primary reference to spiritual, not temporal matters. It was the organizing of a Church, and not the founding of an empire. And here I would ask, Why should God have more regard for the offspring of his people then, than at the present time? And why should he under the darker dispensation embrace parents and their children in the bonds of a gracious covenant, and not embrace them also under a dispensation that is brighter and more benign?

Second. Infant membership, thus originally instituted, has never been abolished. Abolished! Where is the abolishing act? It can nowhere be found. Abolished! It cannot be, for the covenant which embraced infants was declared to be an everlasting covenant. Abolished! Had it not reference to gospel times? And was it not designed to include believers of

every place and every age? Paul teaches this doctrine; for he tells us expressly that "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised, that he might be the father of them that believed, though they be not circumcised." That is, in an after age, when circumcision, as a religious rite, shall no longer exist. Some tell us that infant membership was altogether a Jewish affair; and that the Old Testament dispensation having passed away, infant membership has passed away with it. This cannot be; for the Apostle teaches that the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic law were entirely distinct things; and so distinct, that the abrogation of the one could not disannul the other. His words are these: "And this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God, in Christ—the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the truth of God of none effect." Now, if the coming in of the Mosaic or Jewish dispensation could not disannul that covenant, which embraced infants, surely its passing away could not. And if the passing away of that dispensation could not abolish that covenant, what could? Nothing.

No; the covenant by which infants were brought into the visible Church of God has not been abolished. It cannot be; for it is declared to be an everlasting covenant; and, verily, to the end of time it must and will remain firm and stable, based upon the promise and the oath of God. Hence the remarkable fact, that, according to the Scriptures, the Church of God, amid all external changes, is declared to be essentially one and the same. For example, Paul, speaking of the gentiles brought into the Church, so that they are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, adds, "and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Here the Church, embracing the apostles of the new and the prophets of the old dispensation, is spoken of as one temple, growing indeed, or enlarged by the addition of new members, but not changed. Moreover, it is spoken of as having one and the same corner-stone, and, surely, one and the same corner-stone cannot answer for two entirely distinct buildings. The same idea of the essential one-

ness of the Jewish and Christian Church is presented by the Apostle, when he speaks of the Church under the similitude of the good olive-tree—all the changes which have taken place having reference to the branches, and not to the root or stock; that, amid all changes, remaining one and the same. Thus, we are plainly taught by the Apostle himself, that the enlargement of Church members and privileges in our day, can no more affect the identity of the Church itself, than the adding a chamber or two to some marble palace can change the identity of that palace, which has been standing upon the same spot, and defying the storms and ravages of many generations. And now, having shown that infant membership formed a part of the original constitution of the Church, and this membership having never been abolished, it is evident that infants have a right to membership still; they are to be admitted by some initiatory ordinance. Baptism is the only initiatory rite now existing. This leads to our *Third affirmation.* Baptism has taken the place of circumcision. Or, as the poet expresses it,

> "Water seals the blessing now,
> Which once was sealed with blood."

And it seems astonishing that this should ever have been denied; for if baptism be not now a seal of the covenant, as circumcision formerly was, then we have now no seal in its place. And if baptism be not, at the present time, the initiatory ordinance of the Church, then, at the present time, we have no initiatory ordinance whatever. The Church has now no door; the covenant no seal. But that baptism has taken the place of circumcision, is further evident, not only because they answer the same purpose as an initiatory rite, but because they are of the same import; both emblematical of divine influences; one, under the figure of the circumcision of the heart—the other, regeneration, or the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And, what is frequently lost sight of, both required faith. Baptism requires faith, and so did circumcision; for that was declared to be a seal of the righteousness of faith, and how could it be a seal of that which was not required? And, it is remarkable, the same profession of faith was required in circumcision as is required in baptism. In the case of adults, personal faith; in the case of infants, the faith of the parent availed for the child circumcised, under the Mosaic dispensation; and the

faith of the parent now avails for the child baptized under the Christian dispensation. The argument is complete. Infant membership still existing, infants are to be admitted by some initiatory rite. Baptism is now the only initiatory rite; and, therefore, infants are to be baptized.

In confirmation of the correctness of our position, I adduce—

1. The language of our Saviour: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." If by the phrase "the kingdom of God," we are to understand the Church on earth, the case is settled; for the Saviour tells us that they are of that Church: but if by it the Church in heaven is meant, the case is equally clear; for if they are worthy of membership in the Church above, certainly they are worthy of membership in the Church below.

In confirmation of our position we may adduce—

2. The words of our Saviour again: "Whosoever shall receive one such little child, in my name, receiveth me." Now, what is it to receive a child in Christ's name, if not to treat it as standing in some peculiar relation to Christ

—as one belonging to him—as one of his fold? If Christ was willing to receive little children, ought we to reject them? If the sheep are in the fold, why should not the little lambs be there also? We adduce—

3. The last command of our Saviour: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." By this command, all nations are to be baptized and taught; and now, as children form a part of all nations, they also are entitled to the same privilege with others. But, further, in confirmation of the correctness of our position, we adduce—

4. The case of *household baptisms.* Four are recorded. Now, can we suppose that there was not a single child in any one of these four households? Try the experiment; whether you are in the city or the wilderness, at home or abroad. Enter into any four households nearest at hand, and if you find no child in any one of them, it would be strange indeed! In the case of Lydia, we are told, in almost so many words, that there were children in her house; for the record is this: "And the Lord opened her heart, that she attended unto things which were spoken of Paul; and when she was

baptized, *and her household*, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me faithful, come into my house, and abide there; and she constrained us." Whose heart did the Lord open? Lydia's. Any other? No! and yet the immediate record is, "when she was baptized, *and her household*"! But what follows? "*She* besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful." Observe—*she*, not *they; me*, not *us!* If other adults were brought into the number of the faithful, why no reference to them? No; it seems that Lydia was the only adult converted; and yet she was not the only one baptized. She was baptized, *and her household!* This is a strong confirmation of our position, that infants may and should be baptized. But yet another thing which strengthens our position is—

5. That remarkable passage found in 1 Cor. vii. 14: "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." Unclean! What does the Apostle mean? A Jew would have caught the idea immediately; for he knew that the term "unclean" denoted unfitness to be admitted to church privileges, and

the term "holy" just the reverse. Paul, having taught that all believers were recognized as the children of Abraham, and heirs, according to the promise—"I will be a God to thee, and to *thy seed after thee*,"—the case, when both parents were believers, would be clear: their children would be embraced in the covenant, and entitled to Church ordinances. But, suppose one parent only be a believer, what then? Why, teaches the Apostle, the gospel leans to the side of mercy. Let the child be admitted on the faith of that one parent. How natural is this interpretation; and how reasonable to suppose that many such cases occurred, which would start the very question here authoritatively settled by the Apostle. But this leads me to mention—

6. That which crowns the whole—the *testimony of the Fathers* in favor of infant baptism—which is full, clear, express, and positive. Justin Martyr, who lived immediately after apostolic times, says, that "in the earliest days of the Christian Church, baptism was practised in the place of circumcision." Irenæus, who flourished not long after, gives this testimony, that "the Church learned from the apostles to baptize children." According to the testimony

of Cyprian, a council of sixty-six bishops, or pastors, assembled at Carthage, in the year of our Lord 253. And this question being proposed: "Ought the baptism of infants to be deferred to the eighth day?" it was decided in the negative. Now, let a question of this kind be brought before a Baptist convention at the present time, would they decide it as the council of Carthage did? Would they even gravely discuss such a subject? I think not. And why? Because they do not practise infant baptism. But the act of the Council of Carthage is proof positive that infant baptism was common in that day. I might quote many other testimonies of the ancient Fathers; but the additional testimony of Augustine may suffice, for there is something very particular and decisive in it. Having a controvery with Pelagius, who denied the doctrine of original sin, Augustine asks him this question: "Why are infants baptized for the remission of sins, if they have none?" This shows plainly, that it was the practice to baptize infants in those days, and that this practice was well known to Pelagius. But some tell us that infant baptism was practised in some cases, but that this was an *innovation.* If so, then why did not Pelagius urge

this in his own defence? So far from it, he admits the universal practice of infant baptism, and denies that he was ever opposed to the practice; yea, denies it with indignation, saying, that "those who had brought this charge against him had slandered him;" and adds: "Who can be so impious as to hinder infants from being baptized?" So far as my reading goes, Tertullian is the only one, for many a long century, who seems to have taken a stand against infant baptism. And, mark, he did it, not on the ground of its being an *innovation*, or being in itself wrong, but simply and purely on the ground of *expediency*. And this idea of expediency originated in the doctrine which then began to prevail, that water baptism literally washed away all sins previously committed; which error caused Constantine the Great to put off his own baptism until he apprehended that his death was near at hand.

In view of the whole argument, it appears to me that our position touching infants is most clearly scriptural and correct; aye, and will stand the "test of scrutiny, of talents, and of time." But can nothing be said on the other side of the question? I think nothing that can shake a single pillar upon which our super-

structure rests. We will mention some of the things most relied upon. Let the reader judge for himself.

1. It is said that there is no *precept* in all the New Testament for infant baptism, and, therefore, infants ought not to be baptized. There is no precept for female communion. Must females, then, not be permitted to commune? There is no precept for observing the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath. Must we not, then, observe the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath? No precept for infant baptism! It was not necessary. *Infant membership* having been divinely appointed, *infant baptism* follows, as a matter of course. The law once given, silence itself proves it to be still binding. Some years since, a sub-treasury law was enacted, under a democratic administration. Some time after, there was a change of administration. Did this abolish the sub-treasury enactment? Nobody talks about it now. Even those who once opposed it, are silent now. Is the sub-treasury law, then, no longer in force? Precisely so in the case before us. The *principle* settled, there is no longer need for any further precept. Not long since, a reward of one thousand dollars

was publicly offered to any one who could produce any precept in the New Testament for infant baptism. I think I might, with the same propriety, offer a reward ten times greater than that, to any one who could produce a precept, either in the Old or New Testament, abolishing infant membership! By a positive precept, infant membership became a law of the Church. Of course it requires a positive precept to annul it. Where is that precept? It cannot be found! This is an important question. The enactment originally made, if not now in force, must have been abolished; and, if abolished, where is the abolishing act? by whom abolished? Not by John the Baptist; for he claimed no such power. Not by our Saviour; for his language seems to indicate just the reverse; for he says, "whosoever shall receive such a little child in my name, receiveth me." Not by Peter; for if, when he went and preached the gospel to Cornelius, many in Jerusalem contended with him, saying, "thou wentest in unto men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them," would they not also have contended with him, and yet more earnestly, had he abolished, or even attempted to abolish, that privilege of infant membership, which formed a part of the

Abrahamic covenant, and which was made dear and sacred by parental feelings and long usage? If Peter's acting contrary to certain Jewish prejudices, in a small matter, occasioned great excitement, would his interfering with a privilege, ever deemed by them of prime importance, have occasioned no excitement at all? The thing is incredible. The very silence of the New Testament, then, is proof positive that neither Peter, nor any other, ever abolished that privilege. No! that precious privilege, I am bold to say, has never been abolished: and, as the Bible says some startling things about "adding to," and "taking from," what God has commanded, I solemnly declare, that, without an abolishing precept, I would no more dare to touch the divine institution of infant membership, than I would dare to touch the throne of God, or an enveloped thunderbolt! But,

2. It is said, that "in the Scriptures something is said about baptism, which cannot apply to infants, and, therefore, infants should not be baptized." And what is this? Why, it is said, "believe and be baptized;" infants cannot believe, and therefore infants must not be baptized. Let us try this rule in some other matters. Paul commanded that if any would not

work, neither should he eat. Infants cannot work, neither should infants eat. It is said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Infants cannot repent, and, therefore, infants must all likewise perish. Again it is said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Infants cannot believe, and, therefore, infants must be damned. Reasonings which lead to such conclusions cannot be sound; and yet this is the kind of reasoning—mark! *inferential* reasoning —employed to set aside a divinely appointed institution, which, as we have shown, has never been abolished. When the command was given to "believe and be baptized," there was no reference to infants. That was a distinct affair, as when working was made a requisite qualification for eating; and repentance and faith for salvation. But suppose that baptism does require, in every case, the exercise of faith. Was not circumcision a *seal* of the *righteousness of faith?* and, if so, of course faith was required in that ordinance also. But, could Jewish infants eight days old exercise faith? Certainly not; and yet the ordinance required faith. By whom exercised? If not by the infant, it must have been by the parent. So it was in the case of circumcision; so it is now

in the case of baptism. But some may say, How can the faith of the parent avail for the child? It is enough for us to know that it does so. Besides, in the case of circumcision, there are several cases in Scripture where the fact is distinctly recognized. Thus, in Matt. xx., we find this record: "And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the same coast, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." After many discouragements the boon was obtained. And now, notice the words of the Saviour: "O woman, great is *thy* faith, be it unto thee as thou wilt"—and, says the Evangelist, "*her daughter* was made whole from that very hour." Here it is manifest, that the faith of the parent availed for the curing of her daughter; and that, too, when the daughter was as unconscious of what the mother was doing as the child may be when presented in baptism. Take another case, that of the father who brought his son to Christ, possessed of a dumb spirit, and cried out, "If thou canst do anything for us, have compassion on us, and help us." And Jesus said, "If thou canst *believe*, all things are possible to him that *believeth;* and straight-

way the father cried out with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief. And Jesus rebuked the foul spirit, and it departed from him." Now in this case, also, faith was requisite. But who exercised faith? Not the son, who was to be the recipient of the blessing, but his father. But there is upon sacred record a case, if possible, still stronger—the case of Jairus. He left his daughter in a dying condition, to seek aid from Christ; but too late, as some supposed, for, before Christ reached the house of Jairus, there came certain ones, who said unto the afflicted father, "Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further? And Jesus said unto the father of the child, Be not afraid—*only believe*." *Believe!* What good could the believing of Jairus do to his dead daughter? It might do *him* good to believe in Christ; but how could his belief avail anything for his dead child? But it did avail in that case, and why not in others? And it might be well for us all more seriously to ponder upon these words: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord." But again:

3. It is said that infants can know nothing

of the nature and design of baptism, and, therefore, they ought not to be baptized. With the very same propriety might it have been said, in ancient times, infants can know nothing of the nature and design of circumcision, and, therefore, they ought not to be circumcised. We must take care how we impugn the wisdom of God. Some speak lightly of what they are pleased to term "*baby-sprinkling;*" and very likely, in former times, some were wont to speak just as lightly of "*baby-circumcision.*" Even Moses was once severely rebuked for not paying due respect to that ordinance. Nay, more; his neglect of it had nearly cost him his life. His wife, Zipporah, seems to have been opposed to the circumcision of her son; and Moses, criminally yielding to her, neglected to circumcise his son. And what is the record touching that matter? "And it came to pass, by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him." (Ex. iv. 24.) Let the whole passage be read, and it may well fill with strange alarm those who deride infant baptism on the ground that infants cannot understand the nature and design of that ordinance. They would do well to take heed to their words and ways, lest, haply, they may

be found to impugn the wisdom of Heaven, and even "to fight against God." And here, let it be further remarked, that this account touching the displeasure of God against Moses, may well startle those who, believing in the ordinance, do, nevertheless, without sufficient reason, put off the performance of this important duty, and especially those who neglect it altogether. I have read statements of a very serious character, going to show that, in such families, there are not wanting some marked proofs of the divine displeasure even at the present day. Again:

4. It is said baptism cannot have taken the place of circumcision, because baptism *is more extensive in its application* now, than circumcision was in ancient times. But are there not many Old Testament prophecies, referring to New Testament times, predicting the breaking down of partition walls, and the enlargement of Church privileges and members? (See Isaiah liv. *et passim.*) And is it not remarkable, that the apostle Paul gives an exemplification of this in the very matter of baptism? Thus, in Gal. iii. 27, 28, it is thus written: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor

Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither *male* nor *female;* for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." And in exact accordance with this is another Old Testament prophecy, referring to New Testament times. (Is. xlix. 22.) "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders." And, I would ask, who is not struck with the beautiful and remarkable fulfilment of this prophecy, when, in our days, we see Christian parents, who are gentiles, coming forward publicly into the sanctuary, to enter into covenant with God, bringing their sons in their arms, and their daughters upon their shoulders. Mark! This enlargement of privileges extends not only to gentiles as well as Jews, but to *females* as well as *males;* and this is exemplified by the apostle expressly and particularly in the ordinance of *baptism.* But again:

5. It is objected—If infants are admitted as members of the Church, why are they not admitted to the table of the Lord? Our answer is this: They are admitted as *infant* members, not *adult.* Is your son, who is a

minor, admitted to the ballot-box? He may be a citizen, and yet in order to exercise the highest rights of an American citizen, the law requires some other qualification—a certain age is requisite. Even so the infant may be recognized as a member of the Church, but, in order to have access to the table of the Lord, he must have knowledge to discern the Lord's body, faith to feed upon him, repentance, love, and new obedience. As the Apostle expressly says, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Jewish infants, when eight days old, were recognized as members of the Jewish Church, yet they were not admitted to the paschal supper until many years after. The earliest age for girls was twelve, for boys thirteen; and we read that they were not, even then, permitted to enjoy that privilege unless deemed worthy. Here, then, is another objection to infant baptism which, upon examination, is found to have no force at all. But, once more:

6. It is said, What advantage is there in infant baptism? And might not the very same question be asked in relation to infant circumcision? If infant membership was, in the estimation of heaven's everlasting King, proper in

one age, why not in another? But of what advantage? Much, every way, and that both to the child and to the parent also. Children, when baptized, are given up to God, as was Samuel of old; and, on that very account, are more likely to receive blessings from above. Besides, when thus discipled by baptism, they are enrolled as young disciples to be watched over by the Church, and instructed by the pastor, to whom the chief Shepherd has given the charge, not only to feed his *sheep*, but to feed his *lambs*. And, just here I would ask, If the sheep are in the fold, why should not the lambs be there also? It is worthy of remark, that it was *after* Abraham had given up his family to God, in the religious rite which then existed, that God said, "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." The religious instruction of children is exceedingly important, and oftentimes leads to the happiest results. And what is better calculated to excite parents to the discharge of this duty, than the act in which they publicly and solemnly covenant to set before their children a good and pious example, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

And hence the remark, so frequently made, that the children of Presbyterian parents* are better trained than others. Certainly they are wont to receive more catechetical instruction; and, I think I may say, are better taught to remember the Sabbath. I do not say this in a boasting way, but simply stating what I believe to be a generally acknowledged fact; and it would be strange if it were not so, as it is the direct tendency of the system to produce this result. Moreover, I believe there are many cases in which children have been made deeply serious, by the thought that their parents had given them up to God in baptism. I can put to my seal, that this is true in relation to myself, in early childhood; and, thank God, I can add the additional testimony of one of my own sons, who is now preaching the glorious gospel of the blessed God. And let me further remark, that having the prospect of meeting all my children in heaven, I must believe that their early consecration to God, in baptism, was one reason of the hopeful piety of each and all. But what advantage? I

* I know that, in the matter of baptizing infants, Presbyterians are not alone; but they are usually deemed more strict.

repeat it—much, every way—not to children only, but to parents also. The very act of giving up their children to God, in baptism, is calculated to remind parents that they have "a charge to keep;" and that responsibilities of a very peculiar character are resting upon them.

In reviewing the past, during my long ministry, many scenes of a deeply interesting character rise up before my mind. Yes, I have seen the pious parent presenting his loved child to God in baptism. I saw deep devotion in his countenance. He was solemn. The tear was in his eye; I saw it steal silently down his cheek. He was thinking about serious matters. He was covenanting with his God; he was pleading for his child. He was doing a great work for eternity! Methinks angels hovered around, looking with interest upon the scene, whilst the recording spirit registered the act in the archives of heaven. And now, how natural for a devout parent, on retiring, to think thus with himself: I have gone into the presence chamber of my Maker, upon a solemn errand. I have given up my child to God, in a holy ordinance. My vows are recorded on earth; they are registered in heaven. O for

grace to fulfil my vows, and to be faithful to all my solemn engagements! And if the child, thus consecrated to God, should be laid upon a bed of death, how will the recollection of the baptismal scene strengthen the faith of the parent, in offering up the last prayer for the dying child!

On this subject I can speak feelingly, and with confidence; for there was a scene connected with the last moments of a sweet little daughter of mine, which will not soon be forgotten. It occurred many years ago; and yet upon it the memory still loves to linger. Alas! that any parent should undervalue an institution so sacred, and a privilege so dear. And, especially, alas! that any minister should come over it in a cold and formal manner, and thus do much to divest the ordinance of its proper interest and solemnity. O! if the occasion were only suitably improved, to present feelingly and strongly the great subject of *parental responsibility*, I do believe that the influence upon family religion would be most happy in stirring up parents to a more diligent and faithful discharge of parental duty; and especially in stimulating mothers, to whom emphatically the child is committed in its tenderest years,

and by whom chiefly the character of the loved one is formed for virtue or for vice, for heaven or for hell. God has very closely linked parents and children together in the kingdom of nature; and this is what might be expected in the kingdom of grace. We have shown, we think, most conclusively, that this was so in the beginning—is so now, and, until the end of time, ever will be so. This confirms the correctness of our position, and crowns the whole; for, as already said: *If the sheep are in the fold, why should not the little lambs be there also?*

CHAPTER II.

THE PROPER MODE OF BAPTISM.

THE term *baptism* is a Greek word, having an English termination. It has not been translated, because, having a variety of meanings, no single word in our language can express its varied significations; like the Greek words *ἀγγελος*, *angel*, and *ἐκκλησια*, *ecclesia*, the true meaning of which is to be determined by the connection in which they are found. In the preceding part of this book we have pointed out the proper *subjects* of baptism; we are now to treat of the proper *mode*. Our position is this: Immersion is not the only mode of baptism; nor is it the best.

Just here, I wish to make two preliminary remarks:

1. The Christian religion, directing men to one great object—to worship God in spirit and in truth—seems to regard matters of mere mode and form of no great importance. Hence no particular mode or form has been prescribed for private, social, or public worship; nor any

particular posture in prayer, singing, or taking the Lord's Supper. In reference to the last, although it is one of the two sacraments of the Church, yet there is an allowed diversity in its observance. Some take it kneeling, some sitting, and some standing; while the primitive Christians took it neither kneeling, sitting, nor standing, but reclining. And whilst some take it in the morning, and some in the afternoon; some on the first day, and some on the second day of the week, the apostles, at its original institution, took it neither in the morning nor in the afternoon, but at night; and neither on the first nor the second day, but on the fifth. Moreover, some use leavened, and some unleavened bread. And, although it is called a *supper*, which usually means a full meal, yet, now, the smallest portion of the bread and wine is deemed sufficient, even by those who require a larger portion of another element in another sacrament. Again:

2. As the Christian religion was designed to embrace the whole world, it is reasonable to suppose that baptism, as well as the Lord's Supper, would be adapted to the condition and circumstances of all mankind. If our views be correct, this is the case; but if baptism is to be

administered only by *immersion*, this is not the case; for immersion is not suited to the frozen regions of the polar circle; nor to the burning sands of the barren desert; nor to him who is chained down in a dungeon, nor to him who is laid upon a bed of chronic disease. Nor is it suited to be administered by him who is small in stature to him who is of giant form. Why this want of adaptedness to conditions and circumstances? And why is that beautiful analogy, seen in all the departments of the empire of God, broken only here?

We now return to our proposition, which is this: *Immersion is not the only mode of baptism, nor is it the best.*

First. We affirm that the Greek word rendered *baptism*, has a variety of meanings. If we deny it, we must wage war with many Greek Lexicons; for they certainly give more meanings than one; such as to dye, to stain, to dip, to smear, to wash, to purify, to immerse. Even Dr. Carson, the great English Baptist, who affirms that the word rendered baptism always means to *dip*, admits that he has all the Lexicographers and Commentators against him. If then, Carson be good authority, the point is already settled. And, again, if Carson

is right, who says that the word means to *dip*, and others are right, who affirm that the word means to *immerse*, of course the word has more meanings than one. Put a man in a boat in the ocean, and I think he will perceive that the dipping of the boat and its immersion are very different things.

But, again: If we say that the word rendered baptism means immersion, and immersion only, we must wage war with the Greek Classics and with the *Septuagint;* for Homer speaks of a "lake baptized with the blood of a frog;" and the Septuagint writers speak of Nebuchadnezzar "baptized with the dews of heaven." Now, the lake might have been sprinkled with the blood of the frog, and Nebuchadnezzar might also have been *sprinkled*, or made wet, with the dews of heaven; but neither could have been *immersed*. But, some Greek scholar may say, the word here employed comes not from *baptizo*, but *bapto*. This is granted. But is not *bapto* the root from which comes the derivative *baptizo?* And must not the *root* and the *stem* be much the same? Does not a pine root yield a pine tree? and an oak root yield an oak tree? A pine root cannot yield an oak tree; nor can an oak root

yield a pine tree. As is the root, so also is the stem. So it is in nature—so it is in language. But we can mention a case where the word, which cannot mean immersion, comes not from *bapto*, but *baptizo*. It may be found in Ecclesiasticus xxxi. 25. The writer, speaking of one who, having touched a dead body, had been ceremonially purified, says, *βαπτιζομενος ἀπὸ νεκρων*—baptized from the dead. What! immersed from the dead? Certainly not! As it had reference to ceremonial cleansing, prescribed in Lev. xix. 7, which was to be accomplished by *sprinkling*, this proves that whatever was the meaning in the passage quoted, it is not *immersion*. This is sufficient to prove the correctness of our assertion, that the word baptism does not mean immersion only; and, to crown the matter, Taylor, the editor of "Calmet's Dictionary," quotes some eighty examples, in which the word in question implies something *less* than immersion.* How any candid person, then, who is a Greek scholar, can say that the word rendered baptism means immersion *only*, is passing strange. I think it must be put amongst the most remarkable of "the curiosities of literature."

* See Peters' work on Baptism.

Again: If we say that the word in question means immersion only, we must wage war with many scripture facts and declarations. This is a serious charge; but I think I can prove it true. If I did not believe the evidence of the fact to be clear, and the error involved serious, I would not, I *could* not, bring such a charge against Christian brethren whom I respect and love. But for the proof of our assertion, take Heb. ix. 10. Here Paul speaks of *diaphorois baptismois—divers baptisms.* Now, if there be only one mode of baptism, why speak of *divers* baptisms? Should I take you into a gallery of paintings and promise to show you *divers* pictures, and show you only one, what would you think of my promise? Or, should I invite you into my orchard and promise to treat you to *divers* fruits, and give you only one, would you not be grievously disappointed? Again, take Mark vii. 4: "And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, such as the washing of cups, and pots, and of brazen vessels, and tables." The word here translated *washings*, is *baptisms;* and there is unquestionably reference to the various ablutions practised amongst the Jews, and for which water-pots, filled with water, were usually placed

at the door. Now, whilst it is quite possible that the cups and pots, and perhaps the brazen vessels, may have been immersed, it is quite certain that the tables or couches were not immersed, for they were very cumbrous articles of furniture, being usually, as we learn, twenty feet long and four feet wide; too large, I should judge, to be conveniently *immersed*, especially in the water-pots just mentioned. But the next passage of Scripture which I shall adduce to prove that the word in question does not always mean to immerse, is found in Lev. xiv. 4—6: "Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed, two birds alive, and clean, and cedar-wood, and scarlet and hyssop; and the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel, over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar-wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip (baptize) them, and the living bird, in the blood of the bird that was killed." Now, I would ask, how is it possible that the living bird, the scarlet, and the hyssop, *all* could have been immersed in the blood of one bird? Here, then, we have evidence again that an object may be *baptized*, and at the same time not *immersed!* And yet

some tell us that the word in question means *only* to *immerse*. I have affirmed, that if we say the word baptism means nothing but immersion, we stand opposed to many scriptural facts and declarations; and I ask, has not this point been proved? But there are still other passages of Scripture even yet more to the point; for they show, not only that the word in question does mean something besides immersion, but there are cases (and not a few) in Scripture, where the word cannot mean immersion at all. This is a very important matter; for if all the lexicons and classical writers should give immersion as the meaning of the word, that should have no weight with us, if the *Scriptures* did not do the same; for the classic sense of a word is frequently not its religious sense, and it is its religious sense that we wish to know. I have said that the *classic* sense of a word is frequently not its *religious* sense. Many cases might be mentioned. Let the following suffice: The Greek word *deipnon*, rendered *supper*, is, in the lexicons and by classic writers, invariably used to denote a *full meal;* and yet, in the sacrament which commemorates the death of Christ, it means no such thing; for, although that sacrament is

called a *supper*, yet the Apostle, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, rebukes sharply those who were disposed to partake of it as a full meal. "If any man hunger," says he, "let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation." The use of the smallest portion of the bread and wine for the purpose designed, is called a *supper;* and the practical use of the term, in its common acceptation, is made a matter of rebuke by the Apostle. This shows, conclusively, two things: First, that the *classic* meaning of a word may not be its *sacred* meaning: and secondly, that it is important to know in what sense it is used in Scripture.* Now, with regard to the word

* The word rendered *church* in the sacred writings is *ecclesia*, in Greek, and was originally used with exclusive reference to the calling of people together for civil purposes. This was its classic meaning. In Homer and Xenophon, and all the classic writers, it was used in no other sense. But Stephen, speaking of the Church (*ecclesia*) in the wilderness, evidently used it in another sense; and so did Luke, when he said, "The Lord added daily to the Church (*ecclesia*) such as should be saved;" and so did Paul, when he speaks of the Church (*ecclesia*) of the living God, being the pillar and ground of the truth; and so does Christ, when he said, "Upon this rock will I build my Church," (*ecclesia.*) This proves, conclusively, that the classic and the sacred meaning of a word may be very differ-

baptism, we have pointed out several passages in the Bible, where it must mean something different from immersion; I will now mention others, where it cannot mean immersion at all. This is manifest in all those passages of Scripture which call the influences of the Spirit baptism; and we find that these influences are represented as vouchsafed in various modes and forms: indeed, in almost every mode and form, except immersion. Thus, Hosea xiv. 5: "I will be as the *dew* unto Israel." Again, Isaiah xliv. 3: "I will *pour* my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." And again, Isaiah lii. 15: "He shall *sprinkle* many nations." And again, Ezek. xxxvi. 25: "Then will I *sprinkle* clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." These, and many similar passages of Scripture, unquestionably refer to the influences of the Spirit, which should be vouchsafed to the Church in gospel times: and these influences of the Spirit are, in the Scriptures, expressly called *baptism.* Do you demand proof? I give it. What said our

ent; and, of course, its true meaning must be ascertained by the connection in which it is found.

Saviour, just before his ascension? "John indeed baptised with water, but ye shall be baptized with the *Holy Ghost* not many days hence." And when did this baptism of the Spirit take place? On the day of Pentecost. Then it was that the Spirit was poured out from on high; and, as an emblem of his descending and resting upon the apostles, cloven tongues, like as of fire, *sat* upon each of them. There is no representation of immersion [illegible]. The Spirit descended and rested upon [illegible]: this is in exact accordance with the promise of the ascending Saviour, and a well known Old Testament prophecy; and Peter himself confirms it in these words: "This is that which was spoken of by Joel the prophet; And it shall come to pass, in the last days, saith God, I will *pour out* of my Spirit upon all flesh." Now, this *pouring out* of the Spirit is evidently the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which the Saviour promised, and if he calls the pouring out of the Spirit baptism, this must fix the religious meaning of the word; and that no matter even what may be its *classic* meaning. As an additional proof that the sacred meaning of the word is not immersion, take this remarkable Bible fact, that the subject is never represented

as applied to the element, as in the case of immersion, but directly the reverse. In every case the element is represented as applied to the subject. Take this case: "I baptize *with* water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I: He shall baptize you *with* the Holy Ghost and with fire." Mark! not *in* the Holy Ghost, and *in* fire, but *with*. This clearly implies, that *the element is to be applied to the subject, and not the subject to the element.* If you correct your child with a rod, you apply the rod to the child, and not the child to the rod. Thus have we shown from Scripture itself, not only that there are many passages in sacred writ where the word baptism does mean something besides immersion; but there are also passages in the Bible, and not a few, where the word does not, *cannot* mean immersion at all. And yet some tell us that the word in question means to immerse, and nothing else. But, it may be said, if the meaning of the word itself cannot restrict baptism to immersion, this restriction is made by certain *examples* and *allusions*, found upon sacred record. Well, as we wish the reader, after a thorough examination of the whole subject, to be fully convinced that our views are scriptural

and right, we will notice the examples and allusions which are most relied upon.

1. The case of *John's baptism.* It is said that John baptized by immersion. This, to me, is very doubtful, for we are told that "all Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, came to John, and were baptized of him, in* (or at) Jordan, confessing their sins." Now, if only one-tenth part of the population, which, according to Josephus, then existed in those regions, were baptized by immersion, and if we allow but one minute for each to confess his sins, and be baptized by immersion, John must have remained in the water some six hours every day, for three years, whilst the whole of John's ministry did not last one-third of that time! The strong probability is, that John, according to the practice prescribed in Leviticus, baptized or purified, as the term is sometimes rendered, by *sprinkling*, and not by *immersion.* And here I will just advert to that passage, so much relied upon: *John's baptizing in Enon, because there was much water there.* Enon was not a river, it was only a town, or place where were πολλα ὑδατα, not much water, (singular,) but *many*

* For verbal criticisms, see a subsequent page.

waters, or streams, (plural). And, as immense multitudes attended upon his preaching, there were other purposes for which water, or rather, *many streams*, would be vastly more needed, than for the mere matter of immersion. When our Methodist brethren are about fixing upon a place for some great camp-meeting, *much water*, or *many streams*, or springs, would be a strong recommendation with them, although it is well known that they usually baptize by sprinkling, and not immersion. *Much water!* John did not need much for the purpose of immersing his disciples; one pool, or stream, would have answered as well as a thousand! But, for culinary, drinking, and daily ablution purposes, much water, or many streams, would have been absolutely necessary. Besides, on this occasion, John seems to have gone *from* Bethabara, the main ford of Jordan, to Enon, where there was no river, but many streams. If much water, for the purpose of immersion, was the object in view, why di John leave the river Jordan? Certainly there was water enough in Jordan for immersion; but it may not have been so well adapted for the accommodation of the crowd in other respects. But, after all, suppose that John baptized the multi-

tudes in Jordan, and in Enon, by *immersion*, his baptism was not the Christian baptism, for *that* was not as yet instituted; for by referring to Acts xix., it will be seen, that those who had been baptized by John, were baptized over again; so that if one who had been baptized by John had fallen asleep, and were just waked, his baptism could not be esteemed valid; but like those at Ephesus, he must receive another baptism, or be baptized over again. This, I think, should forever settle the matter with regard to John's baptism. But,

2. There is the *example of Christ*—was he not immersed? I am strongly inclined to think that he was not; for, as we have said, sprinkling was the mode prescribed for purifying, under the Levitical economy, and John seems to have followed that example. But, is it not said, that when Jesus was baptized, "he went up straightway *out of* the water?" The word here translated, *out of*, is *apo*, the very word found in this sentence, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee (*apo*) *from* the wrath to come;"—and, in this passage, "If thou be the Son of God, come down (*apo*) *from* the cross." (Matt. xxvii. 4.) Would it be proper to read—Out of the wrath to come; or,

come down out of the cross? There are very many cases where the particle *apo* may be rendered *from*, and why not in the passage before us? It will then read thus: When Jesus was baptized, he went up straightway *from* the water. But, suppose that Christ, to fulfil all righteousness—to comply with all the requirements of that day—was immersed; does it follow, that we must comply with all the requirements of that day, and be immersed also? Then, on the same principle, circumcision is still binding, for Christ was circumcised; and we must keep the passover, for Christ kept the Jewish passover; and we must observe the Jewish Sabbath, for Christ observed the Jewish Sabbath. But, it is said, Christ is our example, and we must follow him. Certainly, Christ is our example in many things. We must follow Christ, in whatever he intends that we should follow him; but what was peculiar to himself, and the requirements of the Levitical law, at that time, was, of course, never designed for our imitation. He fasted forty days; must we fast forty days? He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil; must we be led into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil?

He was crowned with thorns; must we, also, be crowned with thorns? He was crucified; must we be crucified? No! says one; we are not to imitate him in such things; but in *baptism*, we are to follow him. Then we are not to be baptized until we are thirty years of age; for he was not baptized until he was thirty years of age. And, when we are baptized, we must have no sins to be washed away; for when he was baptized, he had no sins to wash away. The remark, then, so frequently made in these days, when persons come forward to be immersed, and made with such an air of confidence, that "it becomes us to follow Christ, and fulfil all righteousness," involves a fallacy; for a proposition is taken as universal in its application, which, in the very nature of the case, must be limited. And, even in the matter of baptism, it has no application; for, if we are to be baptized for the remission of sins, this was not required of him; and if we are to be baptized upon our profession of faith in Christ, certainly he could not have been baptized upon a profession of faith in himself! We see, then, most clearly, that in whatever else we may follow, or imitate him, we cannot in the matter of baptism. But, if the baptism

of Christ forms no argument against our faith and practice—

3. The case of Philip and the eunuch is thought to be strong. Let us examine the record. The passage reads thus: "And as they went on their way, they came to a *certain water*." How vague is this language! It is not said a river, it could not be; for there is no river there. It may have been only a streamlet, or shallow pool, as in the prairies of Texas. "And the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" This is precisely what a traveller would now say if, on his way to San Antonio, he should come to the Cibolo, and see by the roadside, what I have seen, a place scooped out by the hand of nature, where travellers usually water their horses. And, I am confirmed in this opinion, by the fact, that the region through which the eunuch was passing, was said to be in the south country, and called a desert; and which in latitude, climate, and face of the country, is very much the same as the region of the Cibolo, some sixteen miles east of San Antonio. But, what said the eunuch? "See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Observe—he had just been reading

that prediction concerning the Messiah: "He shall *sprinkle* many nations." "Of whom," says the eunuch, "speaketh the prophet this, of himself, or some other? And Philip began at the same scripture, and preached unto him, Jesus." The eunuch believing Christ to be the Messiah, wished, in accordance with the prediction just read, to be *sprinkled* in his name. Not *sprinkled*, says one, but *immersed!* How unnatural this is! For it was not predicted that Christ should *immerse*, but that he should *sprinkle*. Hence the eunuch did not wait until he came to a river; but as soon as he saw any water near the road, he immediately proposed to have the element applied to him, in the mode and form predicted. But, says the objector, the eunuch must have been immersed; for it is said, that "he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." Observe, both were in the chariot; and it is not at all surprising that both should have got out of the chariot, and have gone down *to* the water. "Not *to*," again says the objector, "but *into*." This, to be sure, is our translation; but what is the word here rendered *into?* It is εις, which, in perhaps one

hundred cases in the New Testament, is translated by some other word, which simply implies *proximity*, such as *at*, *to*, *by*, *on*, *upon*, and *near to*. Take a few cases. Thus, Matt. xviii. 29: "And his fellow servant fell down (εις) *at* his feet," not *into*. Again, Matt. xvii. 27: "Go thou (εις) *to* the sea," not *into*. Again, Matt. v. 1: "And seeing the multitudes, he went up," εις, on, or upon, but neither *in*, nor *into*. But, more than this: in John xx. 4, 5, we are expressly told, that the word εις does not mean either *in* or *into*. The passage is this: "So they ran both together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first (εις) *to* the sepulchre." Did that disciple go *in*, or *into* the sepulchre? We know that he did not; for it is immediately after expressly said, "*yet went he not in*." This case is precisely in point, and fully warrants this interpretation of the passage in relation to Philip and the eunuch: "And they went down both *to* the water—yet went they not *in*." And what may confirm us in the correctness of this conclusion, is this remarkable fact, that when the word εις really means *in*, or *into*, it is, almost without an exception, *reduplicated;* but in the case of Philip and the eunuch, it is not. But is it not added,

"when they came up *out* of the water"? Of course this sentence, in the translation, must be made to correspond with the preceding. And if that had been rendered "went down *to*," this would have been rendered *from*, and not *out of;* for the word ἐκ, here employed, is, in many cases, more correctly thus translated: Thus, Rom. i. 17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed (ἐκ) *from* faith to faith," not *out of*. Again, Matt. xii. 33: The tree is known (ἐκ) *from*, or *by*, but surely not *out of*. Again, John x. 32: "Many good works have I shown you (ἐκ) *from* my Father," not *out of*. And now, if the word in question may, in these, and many other passages, be rendered *from*, why not in the case before us? The whole passage would then read thus: "And they went down *to* the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him, and when they came *from* the water." In this case, there would have been no immersion. But, even suppose the eunuch was immersed, that does not prove that immersion was the only mode practised in primitive times. The Bible speaks of diverse baptisms, and we believe that the particular mode was not deemed important in the palmy days of the Church. At any

rate, if the eunuch was immersed, it seems almost certain this was not the only mode observed.

4. In the case of *Paul's baptism.* Let us examine the matter. When on his way to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ, the Lord Jesus appeared to him in dazzling splendor. Struck down to the ground, he heard a voice, saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He was told that he must go to Damascus, and he should there be told. Accordingly, being led by the hand, he was taken to a certain house in that city. There he remained three days, and neither did eat nor drink. In these circumstances, Ananias, divinely directed, comes to him, and says, amongst other things, "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized;" and "forthwith he arose, and was baptized." Was he *immersed* in a river, or pool? I think not; for, in that case, there would have been some such record as this: And he arose, and went out, and was baptized in such a river or pool. This would have set the great question touching the mode of bap-

tism at rest forever, and there never would have been a controversy on the subject at all. But there is no such record. It is simply this: "*He arose, and was baptized.*" Or, as it might very correctly be translated: *Having stood up,* (*ἀναςὰς ἐβαπτίσθη,*) he was baptized. It is added, "when he had received meat, he was strengthened." Now, as Paul must have been exceedingly weak—having been without meat or drink for three days—I should think, that had he been taken out to be immersed, common feelings of humanity would have suggested the propriety of giving him some refreshment first. It will not do to say, that as Paul had been miraculously converted, he might have been miraculously sustained; for we are expressly told, that he was strengthened *after* he had eaten, and that was after he had been baptized. It is evident, then, that Paul was baptized, not in any river or pool, but in his own chamber. It may have been by pouring or sprinkling, but certainly not by immersion. I have not the faintest idea that Paul was immersed. But, observe, if we limit baptism to immersion, we must not only think that he was immersed, we must be positively sure of it; that is, we must be positively sure

of that which it is almost certain never took place.

5. The case of *the jailor and his household* is familiar to us all. Converted in prison, at a midnight hour, we are told, "he was baptized, he, and all his, straightway." Now, I would ask, is it likely that Paul and Silas, bruised and beaten as they were, would have gone out to a river at the dead hour of night? And is it at all likely that, waking up the family of the jailor, they would have hurried them, dear little children and all, from their comfortable beds and midnight slumbers, into the cold waters of a flowing stream? Believe this who can! But, observe again, we must not only believe it, we must know it, or we cannot restrict baptism to immersion. No! they were, as we have full reason to believe, baptized in prison; and there was no river there. But, is it not said, "he brought them out?" Yes; but let it be remembered, it is also said, "they had been thrust into the *inner* prison." Out of this inner prison, no doubt, they were brought into the court, or more spacious hall. But, says the objector: It is not said, that after the jailor and his household had been baptized, "he brought Paul and Silas

into his own house." Certainly; but who does not know that prisons are frequently so constructed, that there is a communication between the apartment occupied by the keeper of the prison, and its courts and cells, and all within the same enclosure? And that this must have been the case with the prison at Philippi, is evident, because it is added: "In the morning, the magistrates sent the sergeant, saying, Let these men go. But Paul said, They have beaten us uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily, but let them come themselves, and fetch us out." Now, if Paul and Silas had themselves that night gone out privily, how could they have used this language? I believe that the jailor and his household were baptized in prison. Who can say that they were not? I believe that they were not immersed. Do you think that they were? That is not enough; you must know that they were immersed, or you cannot limit baptism to immersion.

6. The case of *Cornelius and his household.* While Peter was speaking, "the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard the word; and they of the circumcision which believed, were aston-

ished, as many as came with Peter, because on the Gentiles also was *poured* out the gift of the Holy Ghost." Then said Peter: "Who can forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Having received the main baptism—having had the Spirit *poured* upon them—let water be brought, and *poured* upon them also, as an emblem of this spiritual baptism; for it is right that there should be a resemblance between the sign and the thing signified. This is the case in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; why should it not likewise be the case in the sacrament of baptism? Peter, giving an account of the matter afterwards, to the disciples in Jerusalem, says: "Then remembered I the words of the Lord: John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." "Then remembered I." Now, the *pouring out* of the Spirit on Cornelius and his household, might very naturally have reminded the apostle of the *pouring out* of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, promised by the Saviour; but how this baptism of the Spirit by *pouring*, could remind him of baptism by *immersion*, cannot easily be conceived; for the memory is usually quickened

by resemblances, and not dissimilarities. Besides, as we nowhere read of any baptism of the Spirit by immersion, how could Peter be reminded of that which never took place? Let it never be forgotten, that the Scriptures invariably represent the element applied to the subject, and not the subject to the element. But immersion inverts the order, and completely destroys the fitness of the emblem.

7. The seventh, and last example on sacred record, which I shall mention, is that of the *three thousand who were converted and baptized on the day of Pentecost.* Were they *immersed?* I think not. I feel quite sure of it; for there was neither *place* nor *time.* Where could they have been immersed? There was no river there. As for the brook Cedron, it was but a streamlet, and oftentimes entirely dry. With regard to the pools, they were under the control of the priests and municipal authorities, and of course they would not suffer them to be used for any such purpose. Tell me not, that *baths* were common in Jerusalem. These were owned by the rich, and we know that very few of them were disposed to show favor to the disciples of the crucified Nazarene. But as there was no *place*, neither was there

sufficient *time*, for three thousand persons to be immersed in one day, or rather, the fragment of a day; for the preaching of Peter and the other apostles must have occupied several hours. Three thousand immersed, in what could only have been a fragment of a day, by twelve apostles! It could not be, especially if they had to secure a sufficient number of baths, and provide changes of apparel. Some tell us that there were seventy disciples, and that one man can immerse so many in such a time. The Bible says nothing of the seventy being present; indeed, the language employed intimates that they were not present, or, if present, had no hand in baptizing, for the record is this, that the men who were pricked in their heart, "said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do?" and we know that the number of the apostles was only twelve. Besides, those who tell us that so many persons could be immersed in such a time, talk as if the multitude was already in the river, or, at least on its bank, when there was no river there. We have shown that there was no pool in Jerusalem to which they could have had access. And, if baths were made use of, the process of baptizing by immersion

must have occupied a long time, as they were widely scattered over the city, and, of course, the consent of the owners must first have been obtained. After much thought upon the subject, I am more and more convinced that the three thousand were *not* immersed; and yet they were baptized. How? By *sprinkling*, in accordance with the common practice under the Levitical economy; and, also, in exact accordance with that Old Testament prophecy, referring to New Testament times, "He shall sprinkle many nations." And as amongst the converts on the day of Pentecost, fourteen nations were represented, this seems to be the very thing to which special reference was made. And here I would remark, it is nowhere predicted of the Messiah, that he should *immerse*, but it is predicted that he should *sprinkle;* (Isaiah lii. 15.) Another remark that I would here make, is this: There is no mention made of any person, after conversion, having been taken out to any river, or any other place whatever, to be baptized. Wherever they were converted, in that very place they were baptized; whether in the city, or in the wilderness; whether in the private chamber, or on the public highway; whether in the prison, or by the

river side. And here, I am reminded of the words of our Saviour: "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet; but is clean, every whit." That is, a person, in the judgment of heaven, may be "clean every whit," without the washing of the whole body; a part will do for the whole. And, as Paul speaks of *divers* baptisms, we would not contend for any one particular mode. If only the heart be sprinkled from an evil conscience, it matters not whether the body be washed *with* or *in* pure water. We must beware how we think more of the sign than the thing signified, lest we fall into the error of those who make outward ordinances a substitute for inward grace.

We have shown, as we think, conclusively, that there is no *precept* nor *example*, in all the Scriptures, which limits baptism to immersion. As a last resort, certain *allusions* in the New Testament are relied upon. Let us examine some of the most prominent, usually quoted.

1. "As many as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death." (Rom. vi. 3.) Is Christ's death intended to be represented in baptism? Certainly not, for Christ's death was by crucifixion; and what resem-

blance is between crucifixion and immersion? Besides, how strangely it would sound to say: As many as were *immersed* into Jesus Christ, were *immersed* into his death. This is another proof of what we have affirmed, that the sacred meaning of the word differs from its classic meaning; and that, when used in Scripture, it is not intended to convey the idea of literal pouring, sprinkling, or immersion, so much as to be expressive of the purifying influences of the Divine Spirit, and our mystical union with Christ.

2. "Therefore we are buried with him, by baptism, into death." These words are in immediate connection with the preceding: and, as in the one, so with the other, we believe that there is no reference to the *mode* whatever; but to something vastly more important, even to the spiritual change which takes place in regeneration, of which water baptism is the sign or emblem. But, if it be insisted upon that the mode is referred to, be it so. But let it be remembered, that in the very same connection, the apostle speaks of our being *crucified* with Christ. Now, if the term *buried* with Christ, denotes immersion, the term *crucified* with Christ, must denote another mode, and that

would be inconsistent with the idea that baptism should be limited to one mode. In all these figures, we believe that there is no reference whatever to the mode of water baptism, but simply to the effect of the thing signified; our dying unto sin, and living unto righteousness. Hence the language of the apostle, in another place: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." But, after all, suppose there is a reference to the mode, I would ask, how is a dead man buried? It is not by putting the body down into the grave, but, by having earth poured upon it. This passage, then, so much relied upon, would only prove that *pouring* is the true mode of baptism, and not *immersion.* How then can it be made to limit baptism to immersion?

3. Another passage which is thought to favor immersion, is this: "And were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea." (1 Cor. x. 2.) Whatever the word baptism here means, it cannot mean immersion; for, how could the children of Israel be *immersed* into Moses? Were they immersed into the *cloud?* Certainly not, for the pillar of the cloud was made to

pass over them, so that baptism by the cloud must have been only by pouring, or sprinkling. Were they immersed in the *sea?* I think not; for that was made to stand as a wall on either side, so that baptism by the sea could only have been by its spray *sprinkled* upon them. Now, then, whilst by the *sea* the children of Israel may have been baptized by sprinkling, and by the *cloud*, they may have been baptized, both by *pouring* and *sprinkling;* by neither could they have been baptized by *immersion.* According to the Scriptures, Pharoah and his host were immersed, for "they sank as lead in the deep waters;" but the children of Israel were not immersed, for they passed through on *dry ground.* But there is no occasion for conjecture. The Psalmist tells us all about the matter. "The waters saw thee, O God; the waters saw thee. They were afraid. The depths also were troubled. The *clouds poured out water.*" (Ps. lxxii. 16–20.) Thus it seems, that the children of Israel, in passing through the Red Sea, "dry shod," were baptized by *pouring.* And is this not another proof of the important fact stated, that whatever may be the classic meaning of the word baptism, its sacred meaning is not immersion? There is

yet another passage, which is frequently quoted, and read from the pulpit in a very emphatic manner, as decisive that baptism is to be administered by immersion, and immersion only. It is this:

4. *One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.* (Eph. iv. 5.) Never, perhaps, has any passage of Scripture been more clearly misapprehended. This can be shown in few words. By reference to the context, it will be seen that this phrase, "one baptism," has no reference to water baptism at all; but to the baptism of the Spirit. We all know that the influences of the Divine Spirit, descending and resting upon the heart, are frequently denominated baptism; and, in numerous places, are spoken of the main baptism; and now, to say that this phrase, one baptism, means immersion, and that this water baptism is the *one*, and the only baptism mentioned in Scripture, is to assume a position rather bold, I think; and which very few would be willing to take. *One baptism!* Certainly no baptism can claim such pre-eminence save the baptism of the Holy Ghost. And I would ask, is not this that which must be acknowledged by all to be the *main* baptism, and which is oftentimes represented by *pouring* and

sprinkling? And yet water baptism by immersion is, by some, declared to be the main baptism, and the only baptism. This is a serious matter, for it is making the sign more important than the thing signified. Not only so, but its practical consequences are serious, and that in two respects:—1. Making the administration of the ordinance, in some cases, in direct opposition to the words of the Saviour—"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light"—and in other cases, even absolutely impracticable. In excessive cold weather to be taken out and immersed in a frozen river or pool, is certainly to receive a yoke that is not easy and a burden that is not light—and particularly if the subject of baptism is in feeble health, or has to be taken from a bed of painful and chronic disease. And there are many cases where baptism by immersion is absolutely *impracticable.* I can myself mention two cases of persons known to me; one of an individual who could not, with safety, be taken from his bed; and another who was under sentence of death, and the sheriff would not suffer him to be taken out of prison for any such purpose. In both cases, although they wished to be immersed, they died without any form of baptism. And here,

I would ask, is not immersion liable to many incidents calculated to pain the pious, and utterly to destroy that solemnity which should ever be connected with an ordinance of so sacred a character? This deserves serious thought. But,

2. Another serious practical result of limiting baptism to immersion, is its leading necessarily to the practice of *close communion;* which is so contrary to the spirit of Christianity, and the best feelings of the pious heart. And I believe that the most pious of our brethren, who hold to close communion, are the most troubled in spirit, when they see around them those excluded from the table, in whose piety they have the most perfect confidence. If I mistake not, this with them is a serious drawback to the enjoyment of that sacred ordinance. "Will you not suffer me to commune with you next Sabbath?" said an old servant of Christ, to some of another communion, who were his own spiritual children. "No," replied they; "we are sorry, but we cannot." "Well," said the old man, with great simplicity, "if you won't let me commune with you, I will go and tell my heavenly Father that you won't let me come to his table next Sabbath." What an

argument against close communion; or rather against the soundness of those doctrines which lead to that result! Something of this kind led Dr. John M. Mason to see the error of the system which he had embraced; and finally induced him to change his ecclesiastical relations. I know a case which greatly strengthened my conviction of serious error in the system which demands close communion. A young lady of my congregation professed conversion, and greatly desired church fellowship; but what church should she join? Her father and mother were of our persuasion, but her husband was of the other communion. What must she do? If she joined the church of her husband, she could not, by the rule of that church, commune with her own parents! And, by the same rule,. if she joined the church of her parents, she would not be permitted to commune even with her own husband! This made an impression upon my mind, which can never be effaced. The system must be wrong which leads to such results; for whilst error is apt to be discordant, truth is always harmonious.

Our argument is now closed. I object to the doctrine which limits baptism to immersion, because the original word, rendered baptism,

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has different significations, and therefore cannot be made to have only one meaning. I object, because whatever may be the *classic* meaning of the term, the *sacred* meaning, which most concerns us, in most cases does not, and cannot mean immersion. I object, because the baptism of the Holy Ghost, of which water baptism is but an emblem, is represented under various forms—almost every form, indeed, but immersion. I object, because, whilst no precept, or example, or allusion, limits the ordinance to any one mode, there are several which bespeak any other mode than immersion. I object, because it has a direct tendency to make us attach more importance to outward forms and ceremonies, than to things more spiritual and divine. I object, because the great stress laid upon immersion is calculated to have a peculiarly unhappy influence upon untaught Africans, and the illiterate of every class. I object, because it presents an apparent conflict between the God of providence and the God of grace—one forbidding what the other commands. I object, because it gives a character to the milder dispensation of the gospel, not in accordance with the words of the Saviour, "My yoke is easy, and my

burden is light." I object, because immersion is liable to circumstances calculated to disturb that calm and devotional frame of mind, so necessary in administering and receiving so holy an ordinance. I object, because, limiting baptism to immersion, we are likely to think, and to speak lightly of the term *sprinkling*, made sacred by many hallowed associations, and especially by the fact, that the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, is emphatically called "the blood of sprinkling." And, finally, I object, because, if I embrace the doctrine that there is no valid baptism but by immersion, I must pronounce every other mode unavailing. I must unchurch more than four-fifths of the Christian world! I must say, that the great mass of those who have gone from earth to heaven, have gone unbaptized! Moreover, I must interpose a cruel barrier between myself and those whom in the Lord I love. Aye, and if my dearest friends and nearest relations; if my venerated parents, or my own dear children, or even the wife of my bosom, be of another communion—though devout as martyrs, and pure as the angels of God—I must not be permitted to meet them at the table of the Lord! Although I have evidence

that the Master accepts them as members of his Church, yet I must not accept them as such! And if the spirits of the just, made perfect in heaven, are willing to commune with them in the Church on high, I must not commune with them in the Church below! This, I think, must forever seal the condemnation of the doctrine which limits baptism to immersion.

But, beloved reader, remember that signs and emblems are but shadows. The substance you must have, or vain will be water baptism administered in any mode or form whatever; for as, according to the Scriptures, "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature"—so it is in baptism. Let the question then be, not whether I have, either in infancy or adult years, been baptized by pouring, sprinkling, or immersion; but, have I the thing signified? Have I been cleansed from sin? Have I been baptized with the Holy Ghost?

THE END.

